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POEMS

BY

FREDERICK TINDALL.

I.





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*Dedicated to MR. CHARLES AUGUSTUS HOWELL,
with FREDERICK TINDALL's kind regards.*

P O E M S

BY

FREDERICK TINDALL.



ETHEL AND ANGILVAR.

THE NEMESIS OF EVIL.

A DREAM OF LIFE.

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ETHEL AND ANGILVAR.

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HOW beautiful is love when love is true
And free from selfishness!—a spark from heaven.
And such was Ethel's love for Angilvar ;
For love had grown with them, with life and thought,
From childhood's years. Bright was their wedding day
As the first day in heaven when, from Death's womb,
Life enters the eternal and the real.
But here woe's shadow passes over all ;
For Angilvar, ere six months fled, was torn
From Ethel's side, to sail across the seas
At duty's call ; and she was left alone,
To pine and hope, and dream sweet thoughts of him,
And pray for his return from danger free.

Six months had passed, and in her chamber lone
Sat Ethel, the tear-glitter in her eyes,
Thinking of him, her loved one, far away,
Hapless like some dove pining for its mate ;
With joy's full cup scarce sipped, ere fate's rude hand
Snatched the rose-tinted nectar from her lips.
Alas ! love's day soon fades from all our ken ;

'Tis like the tree, whose fresh spring hues soon wanes,
And too oft seems like golden autumn's leaf,
Withered by its intensity of life,
And when the brightest clothed the nearest fading.

'Twas eve, in autumn ; by the open window
The golden-vestured trees stood clustering round,
Like one great nosegay tinted by the sun ;
The low wind whispered, as it hurried by,
Heavy with sweetness, to the lowering night,
Which, giant-like, came hurrying up behind,
Flinging long shadowy arms across heaven's dome,
To clutch all Nature from the dying sun.
Time passed ; still Ethel, gazing dreamily,
Sat listless, chained by gloomy memories.
The white moon poured her silver o'er her brow ;
The wind moaned louder through the shadowy trees,
And starless midnight rose unto her throne ;
Yet lone, fair Ethel sat, forgetting time,
Held by a power—a Phantom of the Past !

Yet see, she starts, turns pale, presses her brow
With her moist hand, and stares in vacancy.
What stirs her spirit thus ? She, shuddering, feels
A strange cold presence freeze into her soul.
The landscape fades—the lawn-grass seems to swell
And heave like angry waves ; the wind's low whisper
Sounds like the splash of billows ; the moon's gleam
Grows fitful, shimmering like the lightning's glare ;
The trees condense, their long arms taper up,
And wear the appearance of a sea-tossed ship ;
While o'er the water rolls an angry storm—
How strange, how vivid, in the summer night !
The vision glows upon her wakened sense,

And ah ! upon the heaving vessel's deck
A well-known form she sees, and starts. 'Tis he,
Her husband, restless pacing to and fro.
A shiver chills her frame—she would not look ;
A horrid fear possesses all her soul.
But dreamlike fascination lures her eyes—
She sees a crouching form steal up behind,
Gliding in sinuous motion o'er the deck,
Then, tiger-like, leap on him. Her strained eyes
Stare wildly ; her heart's pulse forgets to beat ;
She strives to cry—her lips emit no sound.
One moment, a wild struggle, then a splash,
And he, the murderer, trod the deck alone.
Then, with wild cry, she fell back, lifeless, crushed ;
Yet ere she swooned he turned, and his white face,
With savage triumph lit, seemed fixed on her,
And stamped itself into her awestruck soul ;
Then all was darkness, and she saw no more.

When daylight rose, they found her, lifeless stretched,
By the ope'd window ; the fresh air of morn,
Entering, woke not the roses on her cheeks,
Nor stirred her form, struck by some unknown cause.
At last she gently moved, then ope'd her eyes ;
But such a look of horror in them dwelt
That all fell back amazed and wondering.
For months she lay, the hot fever on her soul,
While her friends wondered, and conjectures rife
Rehearsed to solve the cause of her strange swoon.
But e'er within her soul's deep well she hid
From mortal ears the story of that night ;
And when, long afterwards, with fear and doubt—
Lest by the news she should again relapse—
They gently told her that her love was dead,

That he had fallen off the vessel's deck
Amidst the horror of a midnight storm,
She answered not, but seemed as if the news
She had expected, knowing all before.
Still fixed before her eyes, by night and day,
Like some charmed head of old, whose glassy stare
Would turn all those it looked upon to stone,
The fearful face of him, the murderer,
Shone with an ashy look, and nerved her soul
To thoughts of vengeance; for her soul confessed
The vision's truth—that a foul deed was done.

Then one dark night, before the open heavens
Alone she stood, and, spreading forth her hands,
Vowed to reveal the crime; to tear the veil
From hidden justice's soul-piercing eyes,
And drag the murderer from the drowsy night—
Which he had hoped would hide his fearful deed
From God and man—to the fierce light of day;
And to that end her life to dedicate.
Deep silence reigned, as if all Nature hushed
As the dread vow was uttered in the calm;
While the red lightnings, flashing luridly,
Graved it upon the ebon dome of space,
Neath the calm shimmering stars, mute witnesses,
Like many spirit-eyes looking calmly down.
The thunder seemed to growl a low response
To her fierce words; and, through the scowling night,
The storm rolled heavily in fitful gusts,
Dread portent of the deeds that were to be.

Two years had passed, two years of fevered woe,
And still that phantom grinned before her eyes,—
The ghastly triumph sat upon its face,

And woke fierce thoughts within her gentle soul,
She whose fair mind once brimmed with tenderness,
Who, reared midst Nature's nursery of blooms,
Ne'er had an evil wish or thought unkind ;
To whom the flowers and moss-encircling trees,
Whose wordless voices she oft seemed to hear,
As in the shell we hear the ocean's murmur,
Spoke a mute language, better than mere words,
Which, warped by man, seem made but to deceive ;
She who would erst from fashion's glittering halls
Fly, timidly as a young sportive fawn,
To Nature's solitudes, where, musing oft,
The spirit of that world, which was her joy,
Seemed to embody itself in that young soul,
And fill its cells with poesy's soft dreams.
Now was all changed, for sorrow's cloud shut out
Dim beauty's world ; its voice was silent now.
And midst earth's pageantry, through life's gay scene,
With ceaseless whirl her life was borne along,
Mixing with pleasure and with pleasure's slaves :
With them, yet not as they ; filled with one purpose —
A purpose seeming ne'er to be accomplished.
Despair would, shroudlike, rapt her soul ; and then,
Like marsh exhalations hiding the moon,
Would rise the fearful thought " How sweet to die —
To sink into the waves and be at rest !
Yet does the grave give rest to all who seek it ?"
Portentous question, baffling human ken !
But her oath, unperformed, still bid her live.
Oh, oft in the cold night, upon her knees,
To heaven she cried to let the vision come
Once more ; to let her know who did the deed.
But all was silence : only the black night
Loomed o'er her eyes ; no sign, no answer came.

The dead slept on, nor heeded human call,
Their secrets holding firm in death's tight grasp ;
And, to her high-wrought mind, the murky gloom
Of the impervious heaven seemed like a voice
Whispering her spirit, " Seek to know no more."

She was alone amidst the troubled world ;
One brother only left to her, and he
She ne'er had seen ; for some wild deeds of youth
Long banished from her parents' peaceful home,
He'd sought a foreign clime ; a stranger grown
To his fond sister. Oft she thought of him,
And her pure mind with fond excuses teemed,
Picturing that the wrongs that he had done
He had outlived, become an honest man,
Wanting the solace of a sister's love
To wean him back again to home's sweet joys.
Her fancy weaved strange dreams about his life,
Lit by Romance's vivid hues ; and the bright lustre
That quivers round the lamp of the Unknown,
Like phosphor gleams upon the midnight sea,
Looking through vistas of her pure bright mind,
As viewing through the moonlight's silver sheen
We might the dark lank grass deem pure white snow ;
And scanned so oft the picture she had limned,
That she felt sure the portrait must be true.
What new hope-buds began to blossom forth
Around the cup of her grief-laden soul,
When the news came that he, the wanderer,
The wild, lone man, was coming back once more—
Was coming to the sister who alone,
Save him, was friendless in this storm-tossed world !
'Tis the cold hour of midnight. Soft and clear,
From yonder mansion, float the silvery strains

With which Melody, from her home of air,
Soothes the tired earth to rest. From the open window,
Down the dim slopes and o'er the dank parterres,
Now wrapt in midnight's veil, as by a spell,
Through the wide halls, where flashing flambeaux gleam,
Dark shadowy shapes flit deftly to and fro,
Eddying round in the delightful dance
At Music's word, which, like some wizard old,
Whose horn, when blown, could make all reel and swim,
Who seems, unseen, to stand in silence by,
Laughing at the strange power of his weird charm.
But see ! a lonely figure from the hall
Is wandering 'neath the cool verandah's shade,
Looking on the cold midnight, on the lawn,
Through the long vistas of the sleeping flowers —
'Tis Ethel, pale of cheek and dark with woe.
A sense of coming ill broods o'er her soul,
A sense of what she knows not ; she would fly
From her own thoughts, but knows not where to fly.
And restlessly looks out upon the night :
There all seemed looming, to her high-wrought mind,
Portents of dole—its blackness, clouds of doom.
The long-ribbed cactus leaves, the tapering ferns,
The hot-house shrubs of India's torrid clime,
Drooping from costly vase and marble font,
Seemed like the wings of some ill-omened thing,
Lurking in night's dark shades with horrid purpose ;
And the wild trees, far in the distance, waved
Their long arms, wailing like lost souls in anguish.
She turned away—when, with a start and cry,
She staggered back, for in the cold verandah's shade,
Distinct, in the dark background of the night,
He stood, the visioned foe—the murderer—

His eyes fixed on her with an absent look.
A moment stood she still, transfixed by awe,
With stony stare ; then, rousing all her soul,
Feeling the moment wished at last had come,
She rushed upon him, shrieking loud for help.
Surprised, he backward strode, an ashy hue
Clouding his features. “ Off, girl, off,” he cried ;
“ Speak, are you mad ? ” But still she clung to him ;
And soon help came, and many clustering forms
Stood round, surprised, beholding the strange scene ;
And then, with frenzied look and outstretched hands,
She kept repeating to the awestruck crowd,
“ Quick ! seize him, friends ! this man has slain my husband.”
Rigid he stood, and cried, in trembling tones,
Shaken by fear, “ She is mad ! list not to her.
Good people, let me go ; I know her not.”
“ Dost know me not ? ” she shrieked ; “ did I not see
Thee, midst the tempest, thrust him from the deck
Into the cold black sea ? Thou thought’st no eye
Beheld thy deed ; but the great outraged Heaven
Bridged o’er the gap of distance to reveal it ! ”
Gasping, he fell upon the ground, transfixed
With rigid stare, and spake no more ; and they,
Looking upon him, saw that he was dead,
And left the mansion as a place accursed,
Looking with awe upon its stony face,
Stamped with th’ enigma of stupendous crime,
Which seemed, like some mysterious Sphinx of old,
Big with tremendous secrets ne’er to be revealed.
When morning came, they sought to know the name
Of him whose crime had found its Nemesis ;
And when they knew, to her they gently told.
But when she heard it, with a dismal shriek

She fell upon the ground, as if an asp
Had stung her dead : it was her brother's name—
The name, assumed, he bore in foreign lands.
“ Could, then, her brother do so vile a deed ? ”
Her mind turned dizzy at the fearful thought,
And reason tottered on her misty throne.
“ Oh, would,” she cried, “ I ne’er had sought to know.
Blest ignorance, could I but have thee back,
I might still rest, though ever left to mourn ;
But now, despair and horror, twins of evil,
Must rack my burdened soul for evermore.
I’ve slain him whom I loved and longed to meet ;
Who was the only dear one left to me.
But yet, how could he do this villain’s deed ?
What purpose, what incentive, urged the crime
Of fratricide ?—Alas ! it is too plain.
E’en Heaven had rent its veil aside, and, through
The gap of Nature, shouted forth his guilt ;
And the innocent must ever bear
A horrid weight, caused by a brother’s crime,
Down to the yawning grave. Then mercy, God,”
She cried ; “ obliterate from memory
The deeds done here, or e’en Thy heaven itself
Can find no rest, no soothing balm for me.”
From this she sank, and never rallied more.
Ere six months passed, they bore her to the tomb,
A pallid corpse in youth’s sweet heyday prime.
But what had caused that deed was never known,
Save that ’twas said some dark society,
Whose machinations throw a subtle poison
Into the veins of sad humanity,
Which he belonged to—whose dire secrets
Her husband had revealed—whose instrument

Of vengeance chosen was this stricken wretch ;
But no one knew him with that name assumed ;
The secret went into the grave with her,
That the death-stricken murderer was her brother.

So passed she to the mystic spheres Beyond,
As some wrecked boat, whose crew have all been lost,
Drifts out to sea ; or as some lonely bird,
Reft of its young, mounts the blue dome of heaven
With plaintive song, and dies upon the wing ;
And though the grave brings no forgetfulness,
Yet love and purity will turn aside
Life's Nemesis, and, in their swanlike arms,
She, hapless victim of another's crime,
Long drifting on the shoreless seas of woe,
May find a haven fair of peace at last.



THE NEMESIS OF EVIL.



L O ! in shadowy hues, in midnight's hour,
Fresh from the land of dream, before my mind,
A vision of the future stood unrolled.
Methought the silent march of countless ages,
Pregnant with huge convulsions, had gone by,
And a dim era on time's misty verge,
Spanning the gulf of cycles yet unborn,
My eyes beheld. His wand-revolving change,
Encircling, waved over the cloudy mass
Of varied Nature, which, like tints of eve,
When the tired sun bathes in a sea of fire,
Did shift and flash and pass to shadowland
(Like some procession moving silently
Through the dim ages to the Eternal's home),
Altering and passing e'en while gazed upon,
Yet with so slow a flight 'twas unperceived ;
Or like reflected pictures on a screen.
The world I knew not, save that man was there,
And love and hate, and the fierce strife to live.
It might have been some star in the inane,

Which we see dimly shimmering far away.
For there were sharp convulsions, ominous sounds
Of rumbling discontent, fierce wars of sects
And jarring principles, ending in blood,
Heaving the strata of society,
Which, rotten grown, shook at their huge assault,
Like crumbling columns of some ancient fane
Left to the mercy of corroding time ;
While, sharp and clear, like summer's blinding storms,
Opposing forces burst across its path,
As rending thunder in a cloudless sky ;
And o'er the whole methought a dark cloud came,
Shutting out the red sun ; and from that cloud
Two eyes, as from some superhuman thing,
Hidden within its vaporous folds, glared down,
With glance of dire malignity, upon the earth ;
And, as the darkness deepened, the dread shape
Loomed more distinctly in the murky air,
Stretching, like some cloud-reared leviathan,
O'er the dark ocean of the startled heaven.
And the dire deeds below waxed stranger still :
The old idols were cast down—monarch and priest
And titles were no more ; and last of all,
And hardest to destroy, which, like the strong
Battling for life amidst the pitiless waves,
As the last sufferer clinging to some plank
When the wrecked vessel sinks before the storm,
The worshippers of gold sank heavily down,
Like some huge pyramid that, based so firm,
Defied both man and time and moist decay,
Sinks 'neath the rending earthquake's shattering force ;
And Chaos o'er the wreck of former things—
titles and creeds, and wealth by wrong acquired
And by throned wrong upheld—sat paramount,

Fastening, like some ill-omened bird of prey,
Upon the carcase of our polity.
And heaven-assailing Science the idol reared
Of human intellect, by man adored
As the embodiment of his own power,
Whose iron heel had crushed the poisonous fangs
Of many-coloured Superstition's snakelike coil,
And even, like the haughty Greek of old,
Dared to defy the lightning flash of Truth !
Her muezzin-like voice was heard no more ;
The mighty image lay in broken ruin round,
No more to charm the nations. Dumb its voice ;
Belief in its truth-masking oracles
Had passed away amongst the empty shades
Of thrones and principles, and things which were
Rusted and dead and cast aside for ever.—
The former modes of travel and of war—
The iron horse, the belching gun—were gone,
And the vast mechanisms and exploits
Achieved by wealth and strength and dauntless will.
But o'er the world a new dark power rested ;
A might unseen, born amidst gloom and fear,
From whence men knew not, trembling to inquire,
Had risen, like some dark-pent thunder-cloud,
Born of rank exhalations, smoking ruins,
And burst upon the world. Death's ebon gates
Rolled back, and through the past's cold shadowy halls
Myriads of spectral shapes and phantasms
Crept out into the world. All the vast dome
Of insterstellar air man's sceptre ruled ;
The lightning and the elements his slaves ;
And the eternal laws of Nature bowed
Before the fiat of his lofty mind.

So through the keen blue air, with timeless speed,
He flew unchecked ; no need of the mute wire
To flash quick messages across the seas.
The soul's deep eyes, long blinded, opened now,
Ranged o'er the earth with vision limitless,
Marking the deeds of others far away.
The scholar's task was o'er, who slowly crawled,
Wormlike, o'er Nature's crust for truth's bright gem,
For all was known that human mind could grasp ;
Yet, ah ! how small the store. For still, beyond,
Truth's boundless ocean lay, where higher creatures
Perchance might roam, but which, to human skill,
Was and must be for ever unexplored.
The fear of death had waned, for man had peered
Beyond gross matter's veil, and, though his eyes
Were dazzled at the opening infinitude,
When all its blinding glory gleamed upon him
Still he had learnt to start at death no more.
Yet, though so much man's efforts had achieved,
Still I saw hate and crime were not extinct,
But, like some speckled hydra-headed snake,
When crushed out once anon springs forth again,
With life renewed, to blight and poison all.
So they, in other forms more deadly still,
Stalked through the world, grasping the elements,
To hurl them on the struggling powers of good ;
Wielding dire clash of wars and lurid deeds,
Bloodshed and murder and entangling feuds
Resistless now ; for, armed with godlike might
From unseen agents, wielding Nature's arm
To do their fearful will. Alas ! what hope
For mortal might, or strength, or force of mind,
Or calm endurance 'gainst such deadly power,

Sprung from some superhuman agencies,
Passionless, terrible, and merciless,
Whose attributes and purpose none could tell !

Men had forgotten God as the ages fled,
And the wide future seemed a blank, a void,
And men's minds, restless, seethed and toiled to know
What lay beyond, if a beyond there were.
Then, answering their cravings, rose a power,
Sprung from delusion's cave, deadly and dark ;
And a terrific shape, which was not God,
Their deeds evoked—throned on the minds of men,
Sat, and endowed them with appalling powers :
Raising sad mocking smiles at sacred things ;
Laughing at death's black terrors weaving scenes ;
And pictures of the future seeming fair,
Yet vague and fanciful as perturb'd dreams
Seen in the sleep that troubled fever brings.
Then a despairing cry went up to God
From His One Worshipper ; yet, seeming vain,
Man saw no help until red-handed war
And massacre annihilation brought.
And as that One upon the blood-red plain
Fell stricken, he lift up his eyes to heaven,
And cried : " God seems to have forsaken us ;
Yet I will trust Him still." He was a youth
Who had lost all for virtue and heaven's love,
His soul a crystal pure. Then o'er the earth
Rang jubilee ; bold Evil reigned supreme,
And shouts defiant went up to the heaven.

One eve, upon the verge of the deep blue,
There rose a star, which shimmered strangely bright

Amidst the lamps of space ; and all men wondered.
Deep Science scanned the mapped-out heavens in vain.
Daily it larger grew, till, midst the stars,
Like a round moon it shone, and all the heavens,
Serpent-like, girdled with its tail of fire.
Still thoughtless man, wrapt in self-prompted deeds,
Observed it not, save as a moment's wonder :
As some strange marvel, or some unknown star
In the vast framework of the universe.
But wan looks spread of indefinable fear
As the thing grew, and, like a nameless horror,
Born of the fevered brain in troubled sleep,
Crept ever nearer, and awe-bound the world.
Vain asked they of the powers they served its meaning :
There was no answer ; all was silence deep.
One day of heat intense, the star's huge disc
Now grown to fearful size—a dazzling light,
Like some vast conflagration in the air,
Filling the sky and shutting out the sun,—
Seemed close upon them. All stood gazing on it ;
When, lo ! a nerveless horror froze each breast ;
For the thing changed into a lurid hue,
And glowed blood-red upon the shuddering world !
How awful was that day ! Men, in wild terror,
Benumbed and moveless, without sense or thought,
Their souls swept by Fear's whirlwind into blank,
Stood gazing on the lurid disc above,—
As ancient stories tell of Gorgons dire
At whom men gazed, and, gazing, turned to stone ;
As men in sleep, who see some fearful shape
E'er creeping nearer till it clutches them,
Yet cannot fly it,—fixed immovable.
A wild cry rang against the firmament,

But silence only echoed back the sound :
The powers unseen they served made no reply ;
Forsaken, left alone, powerless to escape
From earth, the globe to which their beings were fixed.
Shrinking they stood, waiting their unknown doom.
Heaven's face was hidden by the lurid ball,
And vegetation withered in the heat ;
It seemed about to crash into the world.
All, with sense dulled, waited the direful end ;
When, as by magic, the great light went out,
And all was blackness and 'twas seen no more.
Then feeble hopes sprang up in human breasts,
And midst the gloom men hurried to and fro,
With haggard eyes ; while Wonder asked what next.
But vain their hopes, for soon a wild, strange cry
Welled into space ; and, looking for the earth,
I saw 'twas gone ! Where once our teeming world
In splendour rolled, wrapt in its golden shroud,
On which man lived, where he had ceaseless toiled
And built and planned, there was a void in space.
A noiseless herald from the Eternal came ;
And silently, like an o'er-ripe fruit, it dropped
From the vast systems of the universe ;
And he and all his lofty thoughts were lost,
Crushed as an insect by an unseen hand.
Yet the vast circles of the heavens revolved ;
The star-spheres sang their preans unto God,
Nor knew one of their number was extinct ;
Its vastness lost—as but a grain of sand—
In the far greater vastness of the infinite ;
Its glory but a spark amidst the blaze
Which e'er illumines the works of the Unseen,
Crushed by the evil stored by man's own deeds.

E'en as a thunder-cloud is filled with lightning,
Till it must break and split the rocks in twain ;
So evil, long amassing, burst at last,
And shivered into void the world of man.



A DREAM OF LIFE.



IN the blue vales of Bretange, girdled round
By frowning cavernous woods and purple hills
(With peaks like islets floating in the clouds),
Where many a conflict fierce in eld's dark days
Had stamped each spot with lurid history ;
Deep in the midst of wild and rambling trees
And jutting crags, an ancient castle stood—
The Counts of Bretange's ancestral seat—
Where through dark ages their long line had ruled
Surrounding vassals, knowing no greater lord.
But evil times had come. The trumpet-word
That man was equal made, nor born to toil
The many for the few, had sounded far
And woke a chord in the crushed peasant's heart,
Which cankering rust of centuries could not break,
Vibrating through each breast a deep-voiced knell,
To rights upreared on wrong, and luxury
Fattening on the starved labour of forced slaves,
Whose minds were cells with lion-like reason chained.
The end came soon—society's hard crust,
On which the ephemeral crowds, wealth fathered, walked,

Bulged, cracked, and shivered into shapeless fragments ;
Pressed by the strong volcanic force below,
And lava-like down some hot crater's side,
The seething elements, pent and stifled long,
Burst o'er the world and swept its powers away.
Then, when thrones crumbled and great empires rocked
Like splitting vessels in the pitiless storm,
The Count of Bretange from his lordly tower
Fled o'er the sea, and left distracted France,
Which seemed like some vast whirlpool in the main
For ever troubled, tossed with circling storms,
Sucking down all that near its charmed ring,
And to sea-girdled Britain came with wife
And infant son, and there in quiet lived,
Watching the throes of his distracted land,
As some lone traveller on a mountain peak
Beholding the angry clouds and lightning storms
Flashing upon the chalet-vales below.
For years exiled they lived, and the Count's son,
Named Bertrand, grew—a gentle, dark-eyed lad,
Filled with the dreamy spirit of his southern clime ;
Him the Count reared with long and anxious care
In his own principles—to look on freedom,
The people's rights, and democratic aims,
As things accurs'd ; and, deeply tied to Rome,
To dogmas, and to priests, to stifle thought,
View reason's use as 'twere revolt from Heaven ;
So, the caged bird forbid to use its wings
Or fly in the open blue, its chief delight
Might view as evil its own natural dower.
So childhood passed, but soon there grew a time
When the great world, like ocean's boundless field,
Hidden in morning's mists, broke on his view
In dazzling blaze, and thoughts that would not be shut out

Broke in an overwhelming tide upon him.
He was unlike the many, whose young minds
Run upon youthful sport and merriment,
Love, frolic, maids, exploits of hardihood,
And boyish chivalry ; there was a shade,
A phantom o'er his life, a something strange,
All saw and wondered at, nor could unriddle,
Which made his opening soul a thing of glooms
And depths unfathomed ; unlike other youths,
He could not pass o'er the deep things of life
Reckless, catching and being wafted by the breath
Of their own time, Fate's bubbles of the future ;
He could not skim life thus, content to think
As others thought, believe what they believed,
To run in the old grooves, eat, love, and die,
And lean the future on the lap of Chance.
No, he must probe and dive and seek for Truth,
And find her for himself ; he could not rest
On others' words, for all seemed ignorant,
Led by they knew not what, they knew not how,
Hither and thither on excitement's breath,
By the last bubble of the seeming wise.
The grisly phantom Doubt rose suddenly,
And through his soul there ran a shock of awe ;
Convulsed with rending struggles, ghastly fears,
He strove to hold to the old paths he loved—
The old, old faiths which his stern sire had taught—
Which seemed the pillars that sustained his being,
And if removed must make existence stop,
And the vast life-filled universe a blank ;
Yet vain his struggles, vain the weak endeavour
To shut thought out ; amidst life's varied scenes
Each thing, each word, each spot his rapt eyes viewed
Awoke the poisonous serpent at his heart,

Associated with the one idea,
Driving him to the verge of the insane.
Ever the mystic hopes and words of faith
Seemed jarring with the occurrences of life,
And though full oft the spectre seemed allayed,
Lo ! in a moment a slight word or act,
Or some occurrence which to calmer minds
Seemed of no weight, raised the old strife anew,
And racked his spirit with perplexity.
Nature at last succumbed—no mind though strong
Can bear for aye the tension and the strain.
An illness struck him down, from which he rose
Divested of his former thoughts, resolved
To credit nought but could be proved—so deeming
To shirk life's problems which he failed to solve ;
And hope from life's dim cloudland seemed to say
That life's elixir—peace—was found ; yet vain
We from one vortex to another sink,
As down some cataract a tree is urged,
Falling from rapid to rapid, till 'tis lost
In the blue meres below. So man doth drift,
Till in death's flood he's lost ; nor knows he then
If the tide ceases, or if he must float
Upon the billows of tempestuous being
Through the vast hollow regions of the Unseen.
When the old Count found how his son's young mind
Was steeped in the false theories of the age,
From half-words dropped, and hints and random acts
Which seemed to call up in the old man's brain
Dim memories of the watchwords and the cries
Of factions once the horror of his youth,
First anger and then sorrow tore their way
Through his stern, upright soul, with stainless honour
Bright, burnished like a cuirass of steel ;

But ne'er could threats nor mild persuasion lead
Lost Bertrand back to the old paths again,
Though not unfilial he, nor cold in love
Towards his noble sire. But what can force
Conviction on the mind against its will,
Or order its perturbed elements
When they break loose from tottering reason's hold
And, like untethered steeds, play havoc there?
A frenzy seized him, a wild thirst for action,
To face and grapple with the known and real,
To do, to dare all, that he might forget—
Forget himself, the torture of his mind,
And the reproachful thoughts of those he loved.
One wild dark night he fled, yes, fled for aye—
Left all he loved behind—urged by some power,
'Some fiendlike force within, which racked him ever,
And passed the toss'd sea's pallid phosphor face,
White-hued and foaming as with ire of Heaven—
To France, his native land. Lured by the cry,
The wild-hyena shriek of suffering hosts,
For vengeance on their tyrants, with her sons
He stood 'midst the death-hail, and foremost fought
'Midst shattered ranks at freedom's battle-cry.
Then he beheld amidst the splitting thunder
Of the huge cannon and earth-rending mine,
'Midst hosts borne down as trees by the simoom,
'Midst the loud din and rush of wild-eyed men
Maddened by evil passion and by pain,
What war is in its horror, dark and real,
Which they ne'er know who make and hymn its praises,
And through what crimson seas too oft they wade
Whose watchery's freedom, love, and brotherhood;
How strange, how different the pain-strewn road
Unto the Eden-goal they paint so fair!

Can love and hope, then, Phoenix-like arise
From the yet smoking pyre of human gore ?
Ah, no, 'tis some dire fiend, some form of ill,
That takes love's sylph-like aspect to deceive,
That sits and gloats on human misery,
Luring us by a mirage to our ruin.

But dire reverses came; the tide rolled back,
And the old titles, symbols, creeds, and thrones
Were re-established, like some strangling nightmare
Pressing on every brain. Then Bertrand's sire
Returned unto his rightful heritage,
While his lorn son became a fugitive ;
Till the old faithful Count's large influence
Obtained his pardon, and the wanderer
Returned with haggard looks to the blue Bretange hills.

Then saddened, listless feelings fell
O'er Bertrand's soul—the long-strained minds recoil
From the too great excitement of the past.
Another phase of varied life's enigma :
Once bright, with hope's cloud tintured he had seen
Melt its soft hues in the dull grey of sorrow—
A golden sheaf of dreams and soaring thoughts,
Which seemed might nourish the old time-worn earth,
Had quickly withered, and his soul felt crushed,
Nor knew what to believe, on what to rest ;
He could not mix amidst the careless crowd ;
He still must dream, must struggle to the end,
Must rear up idols, reared but to decay
And be replaced by others as unreal,
E'en as a thoughtless child will pluck the reeds
Upon the brink of some clear rivulet,
And laugh when the wind scatters them away.

But often o'er the blank and void, within
The huge negation of his restless spirit,
A phantom seemed to rise and softly utter
Dim whisperings of the old faiths he scorned,
Of the beyond, the vistas of the future.
In childhood he had felt its strange sad presence
In dreams, mind-pictures, and in half-formed thoughts ;
In youth it haunted still his wakeful brain,
To his soul's eyes amidst the battle's smoke
It still appeared, and ever in one form—
A girl with large dark eyes, long falling hair,
And strange wild aspect ;—not that he had seen
It stand ghostlike, distinct, 'fore the eyes of sense ;
'Twas a shape reared by vivid memory
As of someone once known in days gone by,
Yet vain he puzzled where he could have seen
A maid so fair, and felt he never had,
Yet knew that e'er since childhood's hours that face
Had been his dream. In visions of the night
She stood distinct before his sleep-sealed eyes
And whispered words of passion in his ear,
Or lay upon his breast and looked at him
With love-lit gaze ; by day in fancy's cup
She revelled, filled his soul with wonderment—
Many a gemmed reason plucked from fancy's crown,
He strove to cheat himself, explained the cause
Of the sweet dream, yet knew them to be false.
Had then the serpent madness fixed her fangs
Within a mind too much o'erworked, and prone
To brood on fixed ideas ? He felt this fear
Growing within, and shuddered at life's future ;
Yet 'twas not so, for madness is the wreck,
Not the activity of the restless mind.
Yet this strange thing of dreams, this mystic shape

.

Of womanly beauty, wrapt in its weird charm
Of wonder and of mystery, upon him grew,
Became the luminous centre of his thoughts,
The life-dream of his soul; and passion's glow
(Youth's scorching sun) shed o'er it vivid light,
And knit it to his being; for he loved it—
Though flesh and blood he loved this thing of dreams,
Ay, bowed and worshipped, and felt keen desire
For a vague shadow, and to find on earth
Her like if like she had. And oft he thought
Perchance there was some being who was made,
As all are made for others, she for him,
Whose image haunted him; but wakening sense
Such wild chimeras slew, and fully proved
The folly of such thoughts—that 'twas the creature
Alone of his own mind, a blur, a speck
In the brain's visions, which unchecked might grow
To the stark blindness of insanity.
From such a picture starting back dismayed,
He tried to drive the dreamy vision hence,
And think of it no more. His sire had long
Purposed that he should marry, thinking thus
To cure the vagaries of a mind diseased
With too much brooding, solitude, and grief.
There was a gentle girl, the daughter fair
Of Viscount Nevers, an old valued friend
Of the Count Bretange—Helen was she called,
A lovely girl, whose soft and dreamy look
Spoke of a soul formed for confiding love
As flower-cups for the dew, and soft as they,
And purer than the pearly drops they hold.
They met, and listless Bertrand for awhile
Forgot all else but her, and honeyed love,
Invoked now by the real, filled his breast

With gold-hued thoughts, and the drear path of life
Seemed suddenly spread with flowers, its desert sand
Flashing with grains of gold. So passion's spell
Transforms all nature, strewing o'er its way
Rare flowers and orient glows and rich perfume.
Alas ! that the flowers should fade, the sweetness die ;
Yet, did they not, lured by thy siren wiles,
Man resting on thy soft lap might forget
His destiny, his end, and think earth all.
Not that at first he loved her, but her words,
Her soft, enticing manners, and her charms
Entranced and threw the silken mesh of love
Over the restless forces of his soul—
He lay like a chained lion at her feet,
And all forgot but her ; yet oft when 'lone
A wilder form would loom o'er fancy's glass,
Not as of yore, with gentle looks, but sad,
With blinding tears and with reproachful eyes ;
And oft in dreams she came, and heavy words
Of warning smote upon his ear so plain
That he seemed woke by them, and gazed about
As looking for the speaker, yet saw nought
But the clear moonlight streaming in the room,
Or heard but the low splash of falling rain
Through the deep gloom that darkened Nature's face.
So the months passed, and a strange calmness fell
Upon his soul, which seemed some glassy lake
O'er which alone the spirit of delight
Invoked by love did ripple calmly on
Through the clear sunlight, and whose summer storms
Were but the varied changes in joy's sky,
Which gives all varied freshness when they pass.
Yes, 'twas a heyday time—some hours as sweet
Most men have known—such are blest memory's food

For life's long years, if they have known them not.
Alas ! they have passed over life's dim scene
As a blind man walks o'er the summer fields,
And missed its beauty and its hidden charm.
The peal of bells floats on the golden air,
And in the little church among the vines
They silent stand, the two to be made one—
Bertrand and Helen—and the long-robed priest
Mutters the church's blessing o'er their heads,
And the dim vaulted aisles are gay with colour,
Bright faces, flashing eyes, and orange bloom ;
The rustling whisper of maiden drapery
Sweeps o'er the antique stone and oaken seats,
And there she stands—the bride—a budding flower,
Glistening with tears as with the mists of morn,
Full joy pulsating in her heart, her cheek
Suffused with bliss and crimson modesty ;
And he—how pale he looks, how strange, how worn !
What means that anxious brow on such a day ?

Listen : at night the dream had come once more,
And in strange warning accents whispered woe
Upon his bridal—then with morning's light
The pale form vanished, shrieking in his ear,
“ Woe be to those who wedded are to-morrow.
Fly, false one, fly ; I am thy fate, thou'rt mine.”
He woke—the heavy drops stood on his brow—
“ What can it mean ? ” he cried, “ what can it mean ?
Why comes it ever ? am I mad indeed ?
Who art thou, mystic one ? come forth to me,
And tell me, dost thou live ? But, no, I dream ;
'Tis but an unreal shade, it shall not fright me,
Sprung of a mind diseased—a phantasy.”
Thus reasoned he, yet heavy was his heart

With ill-defined presentiments of woe ;
See, o'er the chapel grows a sudden gloom,
The sun is hidden, and the falling rain
Hurttles along the ground—ah ! why those starts,
That ashy look ? all glance at him in terror,
And suddenly, with a heartrending shriek,
He threw his arms up wildly, then sank down,
Gazing at Helen's face with wild-eyed terror ;
For, lo ! when the priest joined their clasping hands,
He looked upon her and he saw her not,
But in her place a form he knew too well
Stood by him at the altar, and *her* hand
He seemed to hold, and the priest passed the ring
On her ; 'twas but a moment, then 'twas gone,
And he fell swooning down beside the rails.
And all passed out into the gloom beyond,
And last he and his bride, and she on him
Glanced with large wondering eyes, and with soft voice
Inquired if he were ill ; so they passed out
As man and wife, and at the Bretange Tower
Was festive merriment ; but Bertrand's soul,
Pure as clear ocean skies which will reflect
Objects not yet in view, feared for the future.

A year had passed, and rosy summer smiled
From deep-blue skies on the Italian land,
With its cool lakes margined with orange trees,
Like mirrors clear and polished, set in gold,
And huge cathedral domes and gothic towers
Of haughty cities once the world's great marts,
Whose navies held the empire of the sea.
There Helen now and Bertrand far from home
Wandered entranced in love's sweet Edenland,
Yet the barbed point of care left in his breast

Still rankled keen—when lone, before his eyes
That phantom face of beauty mocked him still,
Though seldom now, and dim its lineaments.

'Tis night in Venice, and the gondoliers
Shoot through the moonlight in their deep-prowed boats,
And music's cadence, mirth, and revelry
Float on the dreamy air of the still night.
Up the smooth marble steps to yonder house
Gay troops ascend, and through the wide canal
Glide the gondolas, filled with dark-eyed girls,
And haughty dames in velvet sweeping robes,
With groups of lusty gentlemen; they pass
Up the white steps and through the pillared door.
Hark! rising sounds of music fill the air,
'Tis the rich palace of some famed grandee,
Whose ancient line had filled the ducal chair;
Within, the frescoed halls and columns shine
With many lights, and the gay couples flit
Round in the dance in masquerade attire,
Ornate, fantastic, aping olden time.
See Bertrand standing there amidst the throng,
And Helen queenlike midst th' *élite* of Venice;
Now in the cool night air he wanders lone
Amidst the hothouse plants and gushing fountains
Stretching beyond the room—a lady there
Is standing in the cold moonbeams all alone
Beside a vase of rare exotic flowers;
Woke from her reveries by footsteps near,
She turned: her dark eyes' lustre glowed upon him;
And hark! that wild, strange cry, what can it mean?
'Tis the image of his dreams. He staggers back,
And she in stupor falls amongst the flowers.
Then stepping soft, he looks on her white face;

Ah! 'tis no phantom, 'tis a mould of flesh,
A living girl, young, beautiful as night
When diademed with stars, and luminous
With the moon's tremulous light—beautiful,
Surpassing beautiful, like some rare gem,
Some strange exotic plant ta'en from its clime
And reared midst northern flowers,
Distinct and nobler than its sweet companions,
Like some plumed orient bird, bright, rainbow-hued,
Left midst the warbling brood of colder airs;
So she, too fair, too noble for this earth,
Seemed like some wandering spirit-form of heaven,
By some mischance left in man's lower sphere.
Long he gazed dreamily, and the dead past
With all its vivid memories rose up
Like stony phantoms, and the fragile bridge
Of love and joy that severed it from him
Was broke, was vanished from cold memory's halls;
He felt that he existed but for her,
And then the arrow-like thought pierced through his soul—
Why was *she* also at his sight disturbed?
Had dream or fancy, or whate'er we call
The fate that rules us, pictured him to her?
But she awakes, and those rich pouting lips
Part in soft murmurs, "Oh, my love, dear love."
He kneels beside her, and she looks on him
With those deep passionate eyes once seen in dream,
While he doth murmur passion's witching tale
Into her ear—alas! wife, home, and honour,
And all but her forgotten, past—
"I live for thee, who since life's first hour struck
Hast been with me, stood visioned by my side."
Then suddenly o'er him dashed the memory
Of home and wife, and with a frenzied look

Of unutterable despair he fled,
Leaving her wondering, and was seen no more.
At morn, forsaking Venice, he restless passed
From land to land, flying in maddening haste
For Helen and for virtue, which he felt
To see this maiden were to lose; yet vain!
He could not fly from his own fevered thoughts—
Within him burnt fierce passionate love for her,
And a mad craving to behold anew
The face that haunted him, ne'er knowing rest.
He roamed from place to place, and Helen wondered;
Yet all her fond endearments failed to soothe
And give sweet peace to his distracted mind.

He saw her once again—'twas on a bridge
Spanning the glassy Seine in flippant Paris.
She stood like one unearthly—as some spirit
Had taken the rich, moulded shape of woman
To lure him to his ruin. So he fled,
He dared not stay, and her gaze seemed to follow;
E'er round him through the darkness gleamed her eyes.
He wildly fled and hurried on to England,
Maddened by the enigma he could not solve.
Meanwhile a change was passing o'er his mind:
Slowly the sceptic thoughts of manhood fled;
Strange whispers of old things came back to him,
Born of the presence of this haunting being,
Which seemed to show that there are powers at work
Invisible, which rule us, and not chance.
He came to England, to the land of Faith,
Of sects and creeds; and marked in the horizon
Behind them all rising a stranger power
(Like the soft glow that veils the rising moon
Upon the verge of the cold midnight sea),

Born midst them all and mixing in their nature,
Yet strange and new, unknown if good or ill,
Unfurling a strange banner of defiance
Against the doubts and formalism of the world—
Fresh from the vast Unseen, with new hope filled,
He joined this secret brotherhood to find
If the solution of his life's enigma,
Ay, and the world's vast problems, such could solve.

There was an aged man, whose life had passed
In the long search for truth, whose mild, sad face
Beamed with affection towards his kind, who held
These strange opinions; to him Bertrand came.

Together in a darkened room they stood.
'Twas midnight, and no moon or shimmering star
Broke through the dark. Mute, waiting what should come,
For he had power to commune with the dead.
To him the veil that hides the unseen world
Was half undrawn, and strange low whisperings
Of fearful secrets to his soul revealed.
They stood in silent awe, when suddenly
Arose a star, and then, in dreamy mist,
Flashed many lights, which softly rose and fell
Like the seed-germs that float in the summer air
And burst in circles of pellucid light,
Darting bright gleams, yet soft as globes of dew.
Then luminous clouds appeared by silver fringed,
Rolling away the dark, and then, distinct
And life-like, rose a gorgeous scene of beauty—
A rainbow sky, prismatic, many-hued,
Burning like polished gold; and, stretched below,
Vast plains, and dwellings, and gigantic trees,
And flowers of size inordinate, loading the air

With sleepy fragrance—'twas "Another World."
Not here such wonders bloomed—though magic Ind
Ransacked her treasures, and her large-leaved trees
And luscious fruits—to such they were as small
As stunted firs of Lapland to the pines
That hide the setting sun. A shape was there
Of human form, and, though diverse and strange,
He knew it was himself, that, 'fore his eyes,
He saw his soul in some far distant life,
Some former state of being; and, behold,
Beside him stood a form—the form of her,
His dream, his fate, and all alone they stood,
Rapt in each other, drinking in love's sighs
And sweet endearments; her rich form he clasped
As now he dare not; whispered passion's tale,
Which still he felt too real, and on his breast
She leant and drank his words, melting the while
In dreamy softness, feeding on his kisses.
'Twas plain that they had loved who should not love,
Conjecture solved not why—but crime was theirs,
And fear and stolen joy mixed with wild dread.
And as they sat a swarthy form grew forth
Out of the distant woods, in thunder armed,
And struck them down, and both in ashes fell.
And the avenger, half concealed in mist, looked down
And shouted, through the silent, shuddering air,
"Still shall your souls speed through the waves of being
In suffering, until ye cease to love."
Yet while he spoke an anguish seemed to gnaw
His soul, telling him—love like this must live,
Live on; and that no pain or violence or death
Could change or win that fair form back to him,
Whose once it was. Then the whole scene grew dark,
Slow faded, and was gone, and Bertrand saw

But the still room and the dark night without,
And one clear star above, which burnt on him
Like the fierce Nemesis of his haunted life,
The dire intelligence, whose slighted love
Pursued them both through every change of being,
From death to death, through accumulating ages ;
And still love, like a sun, burnt on, undimmed,
Through star-sphere cataclysms and the lapse
Of Eons, and of life unchanged, unquenched,
Mocking the power of the Avenging One.

The years rolled on, and passion's scorching flame
Fed on his life, and made his mind a wreck ;
A spent volcano, once a sea of fire,
And smouldering yet, though visible no more,
Burnt round his heart within. Yet once again
He saw her. It was eve, in autumn time,
And Nature's cheeks were ruddy-hued, and burnt
With the sun's heat ; and the dry leaves swept by
With crackling hiss, withered for want of rain.
The sun was folding o'er his heated brow
The ruddy curtains of his cloudy bed ;
And the tired reaper on his sickle leant
Amidst the falling sheaves of the ripe corn.
Bertrand was standing on the rustic bridge
That spanned a glassy streamlet, winding down
Into the misty vales from distant hills
Skirted with woods, like a bright silver vein
Through earth's deep crust,—when full before him stood
His dream-known love. Sadly she gazed on him,
As wondering what was this man to her
That she should at his sight be so disturbed,
Or forcing recollection where she'd seen
A face which seemed familiar. He spoke.

And the long silence and the wrack of years
Poured in love's speech rich Nature's eloquence.
He told her all his visions and his love.
"Thou'rt mine," he cried ; "what are earth's forms to us ?
What its vain ties, its harsh and formal ways ?
Oh, let us love in spite of fate, of all ;
Refix the bonds of other lives anew ;
Be mine, for thou art mine. Oh fondest one,
I love thee ! lean on me. I've sought thee long,
Found thee at last. Fly with me—live with me,
And let nought sever us." She listened, sad,
And answered not ; there was a power within her
That answered her, 'tis truth, and yearned towards him ;
Yet she resisted. Though a moment brief
His burning kiss she felt upon her lips,
And his embrace did fold her ravishing form,
The next she fled from him—was seen no more.

The scene of life is changed, and Bertrand stands
Before the bedside of his dying wife,
The gentle Ellen. Long, alas in vain,
She had invoked his love : that love, hers once,
Fell like a mist before the moonlike glance
Of one so strange, so wildly beautiful.
And she in sorrow pined, for though she knew not
The cause of his disquiet, yet she felt
He loved her not, and died ; and he, bowed down
And stricken by remorse, lay at her feet,
Feeling the stamp of Cain upon his brow—
That he had murdered that young trusting life.
Yet but awhile this lasted ; soon the fate,
The force that ruled and haunted all his life,
Urged him still onward to forgetfulness
Of her and all but the one phantom love

He coveted ; whom now he sought, and found not
Through all the lands that gird the Western sea.
Yet vain, malignant fate had stepped between ;
He saw her never more. At last, struck down
By hopeless sorrow, life burnt out itself,
And, like some roving star long gone astray
And wandering from its course, in gloom expired.
Yet strange ! as he was borne unto the grave,
Another dark procession wound its way
Past the dank churchyard willows, sad and slow—
The body of a girl drowned in the Seine
Four men bore slowly by. 'Twas she, his love.
She too had felt the overshadowing power
Of the pursuing fate ; and hopeless love
For the mysterious being she had seen
And lost had made her cut life's tangled skein ;
So they, here severed, met death's stroke together,
And woke together from life's fitful dream,
In what bright viewless spheres we cannot tell.
Was the dim vision of a former life
And the pursuing fate in Bertrand's mind
A fancy only ? she but one on earth
Whom passion had so graven on his mind
That, like fair poisonous plants, it bred disease ?
Or had they lived and loved, and through death gone
To other states of being, there perchance
To hope, to love, to suffer, and to dream ?
We know not, for death's cloudland hides the rest.
What eyes can pierce the darkness of the grave ?
And all our lives are darkness, and their end
And their beginning wrapt in mystery.
Like a broad stream is life, whose source is hid
Deep in the hollow caverns of the earth,
Its ending in the unfathomable sea.

Yet whether all the past a dream will prove,
And should this present life, which seems so real,
Be but another kind of dream, and death
But a changed scene in the soul's sleep—a fall
Into yet deeper visions still,—yet love,
Methinks, so strong and true, must bear its fruit
And win at last, for 'tis love made us all.
On this, then, let us wait, content to glide,
Poor insects as we are, from dream to dream,
Until the Unseen Power that made shall wake us.



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